

House Republican Press Release

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O'Neill Commends Amann, Sullivan for Taking First Steps Toward Investigation of Newton



Southbury Legislator Renews Call for State Senate to Act

HARTFORD- Representative Arthur J. O'Neill (R-Southbury) today commended the public statements of Lt. Governor Kevin Sullivan, and House Speaker James Amann concerning the allegations of bribery against Senator Newton. Both the Lt. Governor and the House Speaker, who are Democrats, were widely quoted in news outlets in recent days saying more needs to be done than simply waiting for federal authorities to conduct their investigation.

Newton has been under investigation by the FBI and IRS for over a year. The investigation centers on Newton's alleged use of his political position to financially enrich his family, and questionable loans he accepted at a job at a Bridgeport sewage treatment plant. On August 2, 2005 in federal court, the head of a non-profit agency claimed, that he bribed Newton in exchange for a \$100,000 state grant. New allegations have also surfaced that Newton attempted to secure business for certain contractors by promising state funds to a charity foundation based in Bridgeport.

"The public statements of both the House Speaker and the Lt. Governor fall short of my call for a full investigation. However, they recognize the need for an explanation by Senator Newton, and acknowledge that something more needs to be done than sitting back waiting for the U.S. Attorney to prosecute. A criminal trial, if there ever is one, could be years away," said Representative O'Neill. "These recent statements by the Speaker and Lt. Governor represent the first step in the right direction. Now what we need is for the Senate to accept its responsibility in this matter, and initiate an investigation into alleged wrongdoing by Senator Newton."

O'Neill noted that although Lt. Governor Sullivan presides over the Senate, his duties with that chamber are largely ceremonial, and that it remains for the chamber's President Pro Tempore, Donald Williams, to start an investigation. O'Neill also observed that while Senator Newton cannot be subjected to impeachment, the Senate leader has the same responsibility that former House Speaker Moira Lyons faced when convening an inquiry panel to investigate former Governor John G. Rowland.

Representative O'Neill served as co-chairman of the Committee of Inquiry that investigated wrongdoings of Governor John Rowland in 2004. The committee was charged with reporting back to the house if grounds existed to initiate impeachment proceedings. A recommendation for impeachment never came as Rowland announced he would resign while the committee's hearings were still underway.

"I am renewing my call that the leaders in the Senate initiate an investigation," said O'Neill. "We cannot expect the residents of Connecticut, who have suffered through several painful and embarrassing state and municipal corruption scandals, to have their faith in government restored when those responsible for upholding high ethical standard refuse to investigate such credible allegations of corruption. I remain hopeful that they will do the right thing. Like Lt. Governor Sullivan, I take no pleasure in this matter."